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President Shelly Lists Concerns About the Affordable Care Act

TWIN ARROWS, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly said he was concerned about the health care Navajo people may receive under the Affordable Care Act and the health insurance exchanges the act creates.

"The federal and state governments need to make their Exchanges easier to understand and follow. They need Navajo speaking individuals on staff to help implement their plans," President Shelly said during his opening remarks at the Affordable Care Act Summit at Twin Arrows on Thursday.

The ACA states that eligible people have to enroll in a health insurance exchange by Jan. 1, 2014, but not all states are going to have exchanges like Arizona and some portions of Utah are not planning to implement health exchanges or marketplaces.

"I'm afraid the Health Insurance Exchange will divide our Navajo people into three different systems - Federal, Federal-State, or State Health Insurance Exchange depending on where one lives. This is similar to how the State Medicaid programs are currently administered," President Shelly said.

Federal and state health officials were on hand during President Shelly's speech.

President Shelly added that he has asked Utah and federal officials for a tribal consultation regarding the exchange system.

"Last week, we requested the State of Utah and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide adequate tribal consultation with the Navajo Nation regarding its Split Agreement for Utah Health Insurance Exchange as soon as possible, because open enrollment in the Marketplace begins October 1," President Shelly said.

The summit is scheduled to end on Friday.

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